

John Dunicliff 1924- 1996

Memories of Uttoxeter



A young John Dunicliff.

FOREWORD

John Dunicliff whose ancestors were drapers in Uttoxeter as far back as 1851 was born in the house at the back of 49 Market Place in 1924. He qualified as a dentist in 1947 and opened his first practice in High Street. In 1952 just recently married to Joy he opened his dentist's surgery at 40 Balance Street where he was to practise for 32 years with the surgery on the ground floor and the family flat above. He retired in 1984. On his retirement John together with Joy started publishing books on local history. John and Joy Dunicliff together produced several publications on Uttoxeter including Early Nonconformity in Uttoxeter 1988, The Independent Chapel 1792-1828 and several booklets on various aspects of the town. John published Three Staffordshire Canals J W S Dunicliff in 1992. They also produced a short history of Tean Mill called Tean and Tape and a History of the Cork Industry in Uttoxeter. While he was in hospital in 1995 John decided to write his childhood memories of Uttoxeter which he published under the title Childhood in Uttoxeter which is now reproduced here by kind permission of his wife Joy. From the very beginning John and Joy were active supporters of the Uttoxeter Heritage Centre in Carter Street and both became Friends of Uttoxeter Heritage Centre a role which Joy now aged 90 continues to this day under its new name Redfern's Cottage The Museum of Uttoxeter Life. Sadly John died aged 72 in August 1996 after a long battle with cancer.

Joy Dunicliff is best known for her books on Uttoxeter author Mary Howitt: Mary Howitt Another Lost Victorian Writer 1992, The Traveller on the Hilltop Mary Howitt Victorian authoress, 1999, Quaker to Catholic Lost Author of the 19th Century 2010, Into the Unknown the adventures of Mary Howitt's eldest son Alfred in Australia 2014 and has done much over the years to promote Mary Howitt in her home town. Joy also published a History of No. 40 Balance Street where John had his dental surgery and the family lived in the flat above it.

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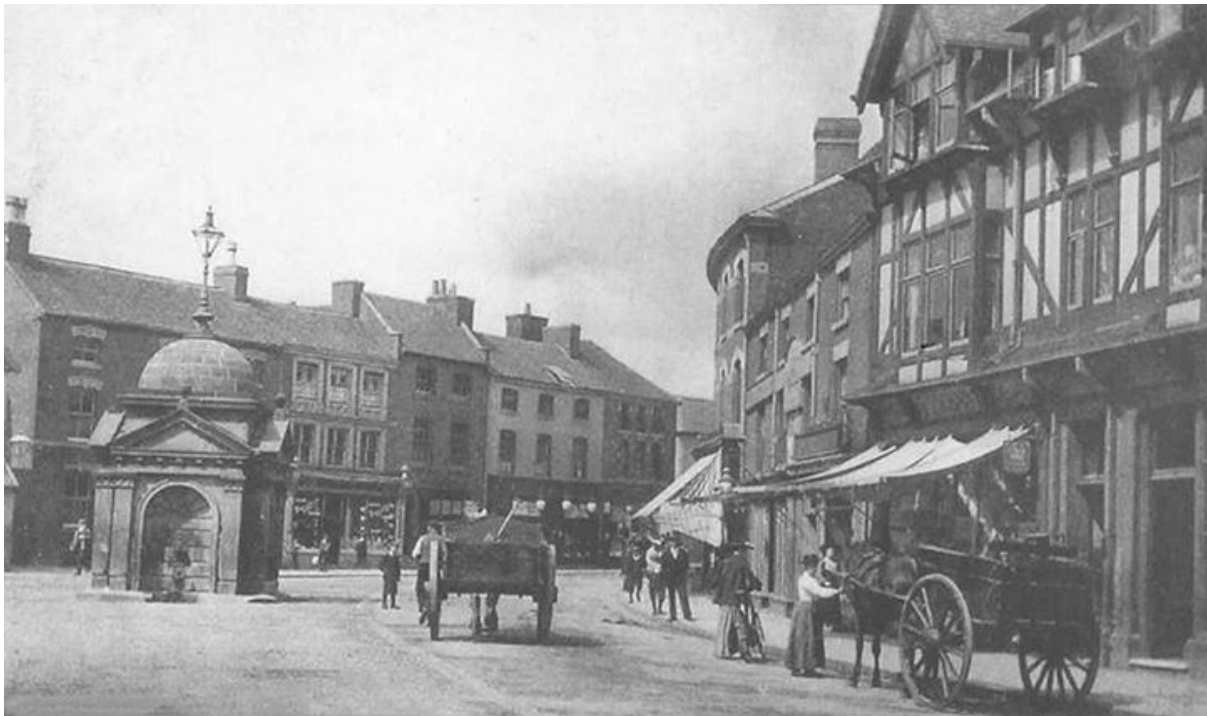
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Courtesy Joy Dunicliff.

Childhood
in
Attoxeter

John Dunicliff

CHILDHOOD IN UTTOXETER

I was born in 1924, in the house behind No 49 Market Place, the same house where my father Percy Dunicliff had been born thirty seven years earlier. When I was a child, the Market Place and High Street both had a reasonable number of people who lived above or behind business premises. I can remember twenty families who lived in the Market place, mainly at shops or pubs, and of these twelve were owner-occupiers of shops; similarly High Street had fourteen families and eleven of these were shop owners living "behind the shop". Apart from these shops, many of the others were run by their owners who lived elsewhere in the town and shopping involved personal relationships. There was a great deal of trust and respect between shop owner and customer. It was not unusual for a mother to say to my parents, "Buy a coat for our Mary when next you are in Manchester," and in due course a coat would arrive that suited Mary for size and her mother for appearance. Appreciation of the relationship was shown by the small gifts that came to the shop - a basket of pears, a pound of farm butter, half a dozen eggs, a bottle of beastings which was the first milk produced after a calf had been born and which the farmer collected because it made such wonderful custard.



The Dunicliff shop 49 Market Place Uttoxeter immediately to the right of the Johnson memorial. I was born there in the house at the back in 1924.

Postcard courtesy Roy Lewis

There were just a few multiple stores. Woolworth's and Boots were in existence then, both quite different from the present-day shops. There were three or four shoe shops which were branches of multiple chains, and five grocery stores whose names have disappeared over the years, The Maypole, Hunters Tea Stores, Masons', Melias', and the inevitable Co-op, but on the whole the shops were small individual places run at the whim of their owner or, occasionally, a manager. Grocers' shops were very interesting places, smelling of coffee and bacon. Many goods came in bulk to the retail shops, with staff weighing out things as you bought them. Sugar was put into strong plain paper bags, usually blue or mauve, gusseted bags that stood up when they were filled and almost always the sugar bag had the bill written on it by the end of the buying session, the list being skilfully added up by the shopkeeper or the assistant because no one in those days had any adding-up machines, just a pencil or pen and a brain trained to add up pounds shillings and pence. Sugar, raisins, dried peas, birdseed all seemed to come in sacks, some of them with their shovel standing on the customers' side of the counter together with the inevitable chair on which old ladies sat whilst their order was being made up, or on to which children climbed so that they could see the interesting things that happened on the counter.



Dunicliff's Drapers shop at 49 Market Place, Uttoxeter. This is my grandfather Frederick Dunicliff in the doorway.
Photo Dunicliff family album courtesy Joy Dunicliff.



My grandparents Frederick Spencer and Sarah Jane Dunicliff, nee Garle and their children in the yard behind Grandfather's draper's shop 49 Market Place, Uttoxeter. Circa 1895
 Back L to R: Ethel May, Frederick Garle, Mabel Louise, Percy, William.
 Seated: Sarah Jane Dunicliff, nee Garle, Frederick Spencer Dunicliff.
 Percy Dunicliff was my father. Mabel Dunicliff married Ernest Mellor the Uttoxeter chemist.

Photo Dunicliff family album courtesy Joy Dunicliff.

Biscuits were stored in rows of glass-fronted boxes so that you could see what was on offer and request whatever quantity you fancied. Tea came loose in plywood tea-chests. These were universally used by furniture removal men, rabbit hutch makers and storers of all manner of junk, after having been emptied of their tea. Coffee beans from various sacks were blended and ground to order, vinegar was dispensed from barrels into the customers own vinegar bottles which made regular trips to be refilled. Classically these refillable vinegar bottles had a glass stopper with a narrow spike and this had a cork collar which fitted between the stopper spike and the neck of the bottle, and was renewable. I never found out why a glass stopper with a renewable collar was used instead of a new cork.

Salt could be bought in great paper-wrapped blocks in various weights up to fourteen pounds which a child had to carry home hugged against its chest by both arms, to be sliced off with a large kitchen knife and stored in salt jars. Butter came in wooden boxes at a guess two stones of butter - twenty eight pounds - to a block - all bulk stuff was weighed in stones and hundred weights. The butter was cut out in blocks as required with the blocks being reshaped with butter-

pats; the trick of butter-buying was in the avoidance of the outer portions of the box's block because that was where rancidity was most probable, and also the avoidance of the thumb-nail pits where bits had been gouged out as samples before buying.

Bacon came to the shop as whole sides, and these hung from bacon-hooks on a rack until needed. The grocer took out the ribs which could be bought cheaply as a base for soups and stews. Then he put manageable sized slabs on his slicing machine - for most of my childhood operated by a hand turned wheel - after first offering you a choice of ends from which you could select the bacon that most took your fancy and then setting the machine to cut whatever thickness of slice was desired. Grocery shopping always took time and was a period for consideration and conversation, and very often the shop's errand boy delivered the order by bicycle.

Chemists' shops also were different from the modern chemist's shop. They certainly had various proprietary pills and potions such as Carter's Little Liver Pills and Snowfire anti-chilblain block, but the chemist was a dispensing pharmacist, capable of making up his own choice of medication whether it be pills, ointments, powders or liquids. The chemist, like the apothecary who preceded him, was usually skilled in diagnosis, and because he made his living by the selling of his medication he gave his advice free. The doctor who was both physician and surgeon sold his knowledge, even if he only made nominal charges to the poor, so many people went to the chemist with all their minor ailments, saving the doctor for serious problems. Most chemists had huge flask-shaped bottles filled with brightly coloured fluids as a type of advertisement. They also had rows and rows of labelled drawers with interesting names such as Gum Tragacanth or Asafoetida or Dragon's Blood, and rows of bottles with names such as Cherry Bark or Belladonna or Laudanum. From these ingredients he would concoct his own idea of what would suit the patient and the complaint, and dispense it in "classical" corked medicine bottles or little cardboard boxes made from thin waxed card board. These could be one of two sorts. One was a little round box, usually black or blue, shaped like two single-ended drums which fitted one over the other - usually either the flat lid or the flat base came unstuck from its side ring - and the other was made from two disks of waxed cardboard which had been crimped into drum-shapes, rather like the paper cases for cooking little buns except that the sides were vertical, not flared. Chemists always wrapped their medical containers and sealed them with red sealing wax which sat by a gas jet whose sole purpose was melting leafing wax.

The habit of dividing bulk supplies into individual portions, or of actually making things when they were needed was a vestige of the years when Uttoxeter was the centre of the world for the local community. It was a town with its markets and fairs where all sorts of animals and crops were brought into the town. These various commodities were processed to become timber for building and furniture, leather for shoes and gloves and horse harness, linen and wool for sheets and clothing, and all manner of useful things - flour, bricks, beer, ropes, docks, dyes, lace, books and so on.

Production of many things had begun to decrease very slowly after the 17th Century as some towns like Sheffield with its knife trade or Stoke with its pottery trade began to specialise in large-scale production, and firstly toll roads and then canals and later still railways made distribution more successful, but Uttoxeter in my childhood still had a few small-scale production businesses.

Uttoxeter had two lots of blacksmiths, very necessary because of the large numbers of horses who needed metal horse-shoes when they did so much of their work on hard road surfaces. I was particularly interested in the Emery father-and-son business which had a forge on a site somewhere in the region of the wide Silver Street/Church Street junction, and on my route to school for nine years. I, and other children, spent many hours watching from the forge door-way and I really believe that, in theory, I knew how to start with a selection of eight feet long iron bars and turn them into the correct sized shoes to fit any horse from a pony to an enormous shire horse. I expect that the horses were all regular clients, well behaved and knowing how to accept being shod, but I never ceased to be amazed that they were untroubled about having g red-hot shoes put on to a trimmed hoof. This burned an accurate bed with clouds of smoke and a terribly strong smell of burned keratin. Onto this the cold shoe could later be nailed. The blacksmith held the horse's hoof upside down between his knees whilst he drove in the nails at an angle, and bent over the protruding ends to secure them, physically very hard work to hold up a horse's foot and hammer away at it. Techniques were beginning to move away from solely forge work to include oxy-acetylene welding and the blacksmith seemed to be able to reshape or otherwise repair all manner of iron work, from blunt pick-axe points to various working bits of machinery.

Mr. Webb at 37, Market Place owned a tailor's shop in which he did the measuring and fitting and his workshop of sewing women did the making up of suits and coats and jackets for men. Mr. Leonard, across the road from the west door of The Church ran an old-fashioned tailoring business in which he sat cross-legged on his

work bench by his window and did his hand sewing that way. Woolley's by the Church made and mended saddles and harnesses.

Walker's Timber Yard used to bring huge tree trunks into town most afternoons to their timber yard between Carter Street and New Street, a region which is now cattle market car park. There is still visible a large concrete block which formed part of the base of their crane. It was an interesting occupation for children to walk beside the large timber-wagon, pulled by its team of huge heavy horses as it rumbled along the roads and turned into New Street.



Carter Street, Uttoxeter with the milkman on his rounds in a pony and trap. John Walker's Timber Yard entrance is visible on the left. Further down on the left are Beeston's Tea Rooms, the low-roofed property which would become the Heritage Centre, the Coach and Horses pub and the White Hart Inn. Postcard courtesy Uttoxeter Heritage Centre renamed The Museum of Uttoxeter Life. The museum now occupies the building next to Beeston's in the photo.

The town had lost its windmill on The Heath and its water mill on Ashbourne Road, but the corn merchants C. A. Davies and Sons, and Wooliscroft's, both on Church Street, still ground corn, and Burndhurst Mill, three miles out of town on the road to Stafford, was still a working water-powered mill, where the fanners took their own grain-harvest to be ground into animal food.

Our own shop was not exempt from bulk buying, and we used to have rolls of nappy material which was cut off and sewn up into nappies at the shop, as many as the

mother wished to buy. In the same manner the stair carpet seller would have rolls of carpet and cut off the necessary length for a staircase.

The period between the Wars was a time when there was not much affluence for most people in the town, either in wages or possessions. On the whole most people could find some sort of work, and could change from one job to another although pay might be poor. Ordinary people had inherited skills in repairing their own belongings, and the large number of skilled craftsmen in the town seemed to be able to mend nearly anything, so very little was thrown away because it happened to be worn or broken. In the town you could have a new spring fitted into a door lock, new rollers turned on a lathe to replace old worn ones in the mangle, a patch soldered over the hole in the copper kettle that sat on the hob on the fire. A suitcase with a worn corner or a broken handle could be repaired, broken baskets could be mended, cane chair seats could be re-woven, spades could have new handles fitted, oil lamps could be supplied with new wick mechanism. The town carried an enormous supply of spare parts, or the ability to fabricate spare parts, and we are lucky that some of that ability is still present today.

There were fewer people in Uttoxeter when I was a child, about 6,000, but Uttoxeter's housing area was much smaller, and the increase in area of housing has been far far greater than the increase in population numbers. Apart from somewhat scattered houses, the town was bounded by The Hockley Crossing, Oldfield's Cricket Field, The Three Tuns, Dove Bank and the Railway Station, except that Balance Hill and Highwood Road was one outreach and New Road together with The Heath was another outreach. The spreading of the town was a gradual process, and the dates of the housing estates can be deduced by the style of the houses. There were very many poor little houses packed together near the town centre, along part of Balance Street, down Pinfold Street, along the bottom of Stone Road and in Bradley Street and Silver Street, and there were little rows of houses tucked away in yards off Stone Road, Carter Street, Church Street, Bradley Street and behind the Methodist Chapel. Their names have disappeared many years ago, places like Wesley Gardens, Bank Terrace, Allport's Yard and Golden Ball Yard. These were the sort of houses which had a living room and a scullery, and two bedrooms upstairs, where there was an outside privy, just one tap in the scullery, and just one coal fired range in the living room, the classical cast iron range with an oven on one side of the fire and a water boiler on the other. Poor people managed because they knew how to manage, but there was not much space or comfort, or all the amenities that we expect now.



Shakespear Cottages in Stone Road, now demolished, visited by me frequently.

They formed that varied group known as labourers in a time when horse power and human power had still to be replaced by machine power, and I particularly remember the navvies who dug foundations, ditches, trenches and roadways, all day and every day, filling barrows and carts with soil. Many of them were expert poachers, mainly catching rabbits although anything was welcome; they knew the countryside intimately and they had lurcher dogs - a whippet cross - that could easily catch a running rabbit. The dogs were trained so that they could be sent out in the night to retrieve and bring home the results of the poaching expeditions, so that the man and his catch could never be found together, and something the dog "happened to bring in" could hardly constitute a crime.

Work could be very hard and very monotonous; sweeping streets with a brush and shovel and a little cart was not much fun, but one of the most monotonous jobs was at the dairy, scrubbing the old seventeen gallon milk churns with hot water and a wire brush, hundreds of churns a day, every day. Many descendants of these men still live in town, but they live in reasonable houses and have reasonable occupations, and those conditions of sixty years ago are much better to have ceased.

Horses still provided much of the power on the farms and around the town. They were an assortment of horses, varying from fairly light-weight - but still multipurpose, horses which trotted about pulling retail milk floats, or farmers'

traps when they came to market, right through to big heavy shire horses which did the really hard work for farm and industry. All the time you could see and hear horses. Farmers were paid a higher price for milk if they delivered it themselves in churns, to the dairy by the station, rather than having a lorry collect the churns from the familiar milk stands which stood by the road side at the end of farm drives, subject to warming up in summer time or if the collection lorry came late, leading to non-saleable sour milk. Quite a number of farmers made a daily milk run to the dairy, a time to sit on the flat cart behind a trotting horse known as a half leg horse, a cross between a riding horse and a cart horse. It was a time to look at the world over the hedges, a time for contemplation, and the visit to the dairy and town was useful to buy the daily paper and a few oddments needed at the farm or house. Horses were used for a lot of the delivery work. The railway moved goods both by passenger train and goods train and delivered around the town by horses which lived in stables by Pinfold Crossing. Coalmen, rag and bone men, green grocers, milk retailers, builders all used horses.



Looking from Market Place up High Street. My grandfather Frederick Dunicliff's draper's shop can be seen on the left where the boy is standing outside. Postcard courtesy Uttoxeter Heritage Centre now renamed The Museum of Uttoxeter Life.

I knew a builders' carter very well and his work took up a lot of time. In winter the horse lived at the builder's yard in a stable, but in summer it lived out in a field up Park Street, so in summer an early start had to be made to fetch the horse to the yard where it was groomed and harnessed and fed and watered, and then the carter went home for his breakfast and came back to start work at eight o'clock. All day he would lead the horse around the town and perhaps out as far as Stramshall, with no concession being made for weather, moving bricks and sand and window frames, cement and roof tiles and staircases, things that he helped to load and unload from the cart. Then at half past five the horse again needed food and water and in summer time a walk back to its field, with perhaps some of us boys on its back for a ride. It still needed some attention on Sundays and holidays such as Christmas Day, all part of the carter's work.

Thinking about builders reminds me of the scaffolding used by bricklayers once building work had reached a height far enough up for the men to need a raised platform. Wooden poles about five or six inches in diameter were used, and the vertical poles were placed into the old seventeen-gallon milk churns, with bricks or pieces of brick packed into the chum, around the pole, to turn pole and churn into a solid unit. Across the vertical poles were tied horizontal poles, using pieces of natural-fibre rope, and the occasional diagonal pole was tied in to enhance stability. Because poles had limited height, more were tied on as the work progressed, and buildings as high as the Elite Cinema were built using poles and churns and bits of rope - I know because I went up on top. The whole erection swayed quite a lot, but people knew the capabilities and limitation of what they were using, as people have throughout history, and the system worked.

The milk retailers' horses got to know their rounds just as well as the milkman. The vehicle used usually was a trap, with or without a door at the rear, and the milk, produced that morning was kept in bulk in two or three seventeen gallon churns at the sides of the trap. From here it was tipped into the delivery can, a sort of straight-sided bucket with a tight fitting lid and containing internally a rail from which hung the pint and half-pint measuring ladle-cans. From these the milk would be measured into the customer's jugs and when the milk man climbed back into his trap the horse would walk on to the next customer and stop usually with no need for verbal command or use of reins.

The town was still very much horse orientated because of its history. Most of the public houses and certainly the inns had stabling somewhere around their yards, with the possibility of stabling one or two dozen horses. There was even one school boy who came to town on horse-back from his home near Hollington, riding

in his school cap with his satchel on his back, to The Wellington where his horse was stabled for the hours of school-time.

On Wednesdays the farmers and their wives would come to market in their traps and gigs, and the horses would be put into the stables, and the yards filled with the vehicles. There was a parking problem then, as there is now but two-wheeled horse-vehicles could be pushed about easily and packed together with just enough access to get into them. I used to wonder how people could get away to go home because their going was not necessarily the reverse of their arrival and parking, so presumably there had to be a certain amount of patient waiting as well as trying to open up manoeuvring space.

We children would be sent from the shop to deliver purchases to these traps with the instruction, "It is about in the middle of The White Hart Yard," or something equally vague, but most vehicles had a name and address on - a remnant of the old days when legally all horse-drawn vehicles had to be named so that the victims of numerous accidents knew who was going to be liable to pay compensation. We would just lie our deliveries amongst the other articles that were being brought to market or were going home from market, and theft was remarkably uncommon. Sometimes people chose not to leave their goods lying about, and our shop on Wednesday was always used as a dumping ground for bags and parcels and baskets waiting for the journey home. It was all part of the service and the system.

There certainly were cars and lorries, buses and steam rollers as well as horse vehicles, but they were very much less numerous than present day traffic. There was no town by-pass and all the Derby to Stoke traffic used to come into town and up Bradley Street, but you would still cross the roads without much trouble. One of the interesting vehicles was a steam lorry which carried beer barrels: the engine must have been between and under the driver and his mate because the chimney came up in the middle of the cab, and as it went past you could see the glow of the fire-box under the cab. Lorries and vans were used to some extent, but a lot of things were moved by rail.

There were essentially two stations, a passenger station and a goods depot. The passenger station was rather grand, with four platforms on the arms of a Y-shaped junction, the Ashbourne and the Derby lines being the arms of the Y and the Stoke line being the stem. There was a booking office which periodically got itself rearranged with a passenger-train parcels office beside it, and by passenger train travelled the sort of things that could be moved by one man, parcels from our shop and other shops which we took to the office and had

weighed to get the fare assessed. odd spare parts of machinery such as cog-wheels or mowing machine blades, dogs or racing pigeons in baskets, a few milk churns on the low hat trolleys which were such a feature of railway platforms, bicycles and such like clutter which the porters put into the guard's van that always travelled with every train.

Mail moved by passenger rail, and sacks of mail used to collect on the trolleys to join other things in the guard's van. There used to be a mail train late in the evening, on which sorters worked on the mail as the train rushed along from one station to the next. The last time for posting from Carter Street office used to be 7.30.p.m., but the mail-van on its way from Carter Street to the station used to make a last-minute call at the letter box by the War Memorial, so if you had just missed the box-emptying in Carter Street you could still get to the extra-late collection from the Market Place box.

There were waiting rooms on each platform, coal fired in winter, and ancient Victorian toilets with rusty overhead flushing tanks, a book-and-paper stall for morning and evening rush hour, a foot-bridge that spanned all four platforms, and posters and notices everywhere. Many of the railwaymen had been employed by the North Staffs Railway company - The Knotty - until it was swallowed up into the London Midland and Scottish Railway in 1923 and they were fiercely loyal to the old Knotty ideas of equipment and behaviour which in their eyes were far superior to anything introduced by the L.M.S. The older men were proud of their railway and looked after cleanliness and service. The porters hid themselves for most of the time in a little cabin by the tracks until they were informed by a bell that a train was imminent and then they emerged and the station came to life.

The country railwaymen were very keen on the appearance of their stations, and things would be swept and cleaned, polished and painted, with the occasional flower bed to brighten up the platform. At night oil lamps were lit on the platforms, the crossing gates and the signals. It all seems very different from the lapse into dereliction, diesel oil splatter and graffiti which we accept now as normal.

There were engine sheds, big enough for eight engines, just across the Derby line about opposite the race course, and there was quite a big shunting yard with cattle docks and coal wharves on Highwood side of the main line between Pinfold Street and the railway bridge. Here wagons were disconnected and arranged and reconnected, and there was a foot bridge by Pinfold Crossing, a sort of basket affair of wire mesh where children used to gather to watch the trains which

amongst other manoeuvres in their shunting used to make use of a siding which ran by the main line between The Pinfold and The Hockley. There, trains would puff up smoke on both sides of the footbridge as they passed back and forth, great fun for children. There were other sidings too, used in connection with Bamfords' factory which sent off vast numbers of farm machines by rail, and which received large amounts of timber by rail into the wood yard.. In connection with the dairy there was a milk dock between The Bridge and the Station, and from here went train loads of milk chums to London every day until, later on, use was made of milk tanker-wagons, with the milk being moved by overhead pipe between the dairy and the railway.

There was a Goods Office and warehouse on the side of the main line, between The Bridge and Pinfold Crossing, by the side of Bamfords' sidings, and here came the heavy goods for the town. An old right of way existed before Bamfords' factory was built, and it was possible to go down Market Street and down Spiceal Street and through the factory to get to the Goods Office with no complaint from the factory.



The Goods' Yard by Bamfords' factory the Leighton Ironworks which had its own siding.

The Shunting Yard built up quite long trains and we as children, in the Recreation Ground or at level crossings, always used to count the wagons. A full length goods train, with the engine and tender at one end and the guards van/brake van at the other end, could have forty six or forty seven wagons.

There is a family anecdote that when the Stoke to Uttoxeter line was being built in 1846, one of my great grandfathers went as a boy to watch the men building the railway and because it was hot and he was thirsty they gave him some drink out of one of their bottles. The drink, possibly gin, put him to sleep and he stayed asleep until his parents came to find him and carry him home.

The Cattle Dock was particularly busy before and after Market Day, and cattle were moved on the hoof between the railway pens and the cattle market. Moved suggests a gentle ambling mass of cattle, whereas in fact it was more like the stampedes one sees in Western films - small herds of bewildered cattle ran along the strange streets whilst men with sticks tried to run in front, or to slip around the side of the herd, to block off roads such as Carter Street or Station Road and more men ran behind to keep the herd in a group, so that it stayed as a group which did not break up into terrified strays who disappeared into pub yards or up alleyways.

It was fairly chaotic, rather like the present-day loading and unloading of cattle from lorries actually in the cattle market, but spread over a very much greater area of town, to the delight of town children. Some cattle came into town in advance of market day, or departed after market day, and were kept overnight in fields kept for the purpose, fields at Cockstubbles and where Elkes' biscuit factory now stands and by the station on Town Meadows fields which belonged to the people of the town before this land disappeared somehow into other ownership.

Market Day then, as now, revolved round the livestock market and the produce market. The livestock market sold cattle and sheep, and pigs in outdoor pens which needed to be sprayed with water when hot sunshine made them dangerously overheated and perhaps an occasional horse, with cages for fowls, ducks and geese and sometimes tame rabbits. This was a time when farms, on the whole, were non-specialised and farmers kept an assortment of animals on the principle of not putting all eggs into one basket". If times were bad they could revert to self-sufficiency and eat some of their own sheep, pig, eggs, poultry, and could survive on little money until times improved. Farming was essentially based on milk production, but the whole system then was based on background knowledge and rural philosophy, and not on science with the aim of high productivity.

The basic variety of cattle was the dairy shorthorn, but all manner of mixed up breeds were seen, according to what took the farmers' fancy, with cross-bred Herefords helping in supply the beef market. It was not until late on in my

childhood that the fashion for high milk producers like Ayrshires and Friesians took hold.



Uttoxeter Livestock Market

We were not a good arable region but many farms had a bit of plough land where a few farmers grew wheat, and more grew oats which were better able to withstand our indifferent weather, and they also grew crops for winter feed, mangolds, turnips, kale and cabbage, all very labour intensive crops. The cabbages were wonderful things. They would be bought in bundles in the market, wrapped in newspaper, half floppy from drying out and with roots bare of soil; they were planted by pushing a spade at an angle into the soil, tilting the spade and sliding the cabbage plant down the back of it, and then sliding out the spade and stamping on the soil over the sloping plant. From this poor beginning grew huge cabbages, perhaps sixteen or eighteen inches across. We used to have an occasional one brought to us as a gift at the shop and it was tight white cabbage comparable with any bought in the shops these days, making several meals either raw in salads or cooked.

Then, as now, farmers were good and bad, compassionate and cruel, hard working or lazy, but they did not seem to be under pressure as they are in these days of business efficiency, reduced labour force, expensive machinery and chemical treatments.

Farming was very hard physical work, with jobs like horse ploughing, hedging and ditching and land drainage, moving hay and corn onto carts and into ricks by pitchfork, and very stressful when the long-drawn out hay harvest or corn harvest was plagued with wet weather, but there was enormous satisfaction when harvests went well and people could rejoice with the harvest hymn "All is safely gathered in". Of course some troubles came on farms, people fell off loaded carts of hay, sheep got drowned in floods, hay ricks set on fire, all the days of toil on a hay crop could be spoiled by a thunderstorm, corn set up in stooks got wet so many times that the grain began to germinate, the best cow could die, but somehow farmers seemed to live nearer to Nature, and God was often in the thoughts of farmers - and fishermen- so that these troubles, though terrible at the time, were all part of the system of life where seasons were "long and slow and sure".

There was a great sense of co-operation amongst the smaller farmers, and major events such as harvest could be co-operative efforts where a number of farmers and their men, their horses and their implements moved about from one farm to another, starting to work together about midmorning when each farm had finished its own essential jobs. They had a communal midday meal in the kitchen of the farm being worked, with perhaps sixteen men to be fed all together, worked until afternoon milking time when some went home to milk and a few stayed harvesting, and then they all carried on into the evening. I can well remember these evenings when work went on late because of nearness to completion, or the threat of rain to come, going on at the slow steady rate which could be kept up nearly for ever whilst dusk fell and mists formed, leaving horses with no visible legs and men only existing above the waist.

The system of neighbours, or of families, coming together to work as a "co-operative" at one of the homes of the group, must have been a very normal method of production in the time of simpler lifestyles. I well remember my mother talking about times at the turn of the century when her mother, who was one of five sisters that lived locally, used to gather with her sisters at one of the family houses. They brought some of the fourteen child cousins who formed the next generation and made a family work party, a social and productivity gathering that produced shirts or bed-linen or jam and preserves to suit all the five families involved. They were all capable housewives, skilled in child-rearing, cooking, clothes making and knowing how to get best results out of not-very-wonderful incomes, and this sharing of work was part of the system of life.

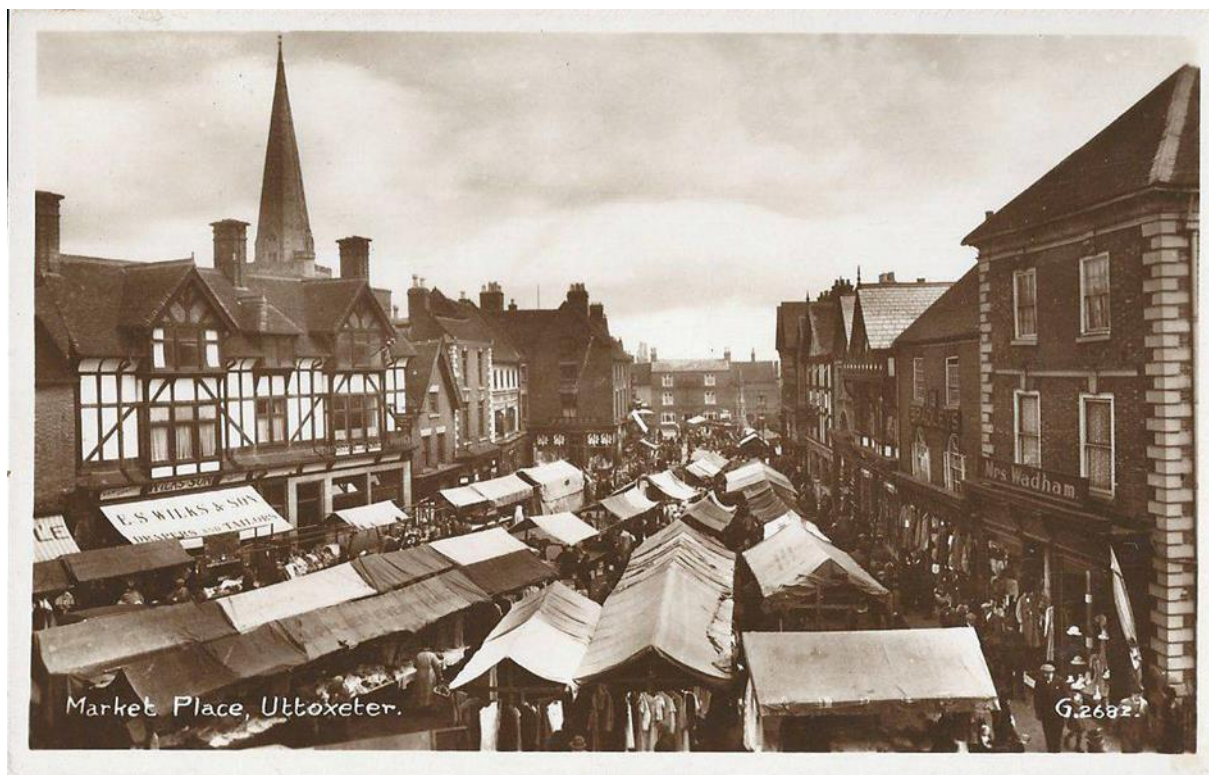
Pigs and poultry were a normal part of most farm life, even if only one pig and a few hens or ducks on a small holding. There was often a breeding sow who grew bigger and fatter over the years, so that she could be large enough to look over the pig-sty wall when she stood upon her hind legs, and reached a weight that could be twenty score or more of pounds. When the fat pigs reached the end of life they were turned into various products including very fat bacon. Many people in the town preferred fat bacon, not merely bacon which was not lean but bacon which was nearly all white fat with only a few streaks of pink meat in, and when this was cooked it yielded a lot of bacon fat used for frying oatcakes or bread. Pigs often went out of their pens, to eat the vegetation they fancied, and dig up roots with their snouts, and wallow in mud in the gateways taking their families with them, and apart from slaughter they often lived very contented lives.

Poultry were free range, living overnight in outbuildings or in hen pens which could be scattered about the orchard or nearby fields, fowls spending the day walking and finding things to eat, and digging out dust baths. Geese roamed about the fields eating grass, and ducks explored ditches and the numerous old marl-pits, now water-filled and in use as drinking ponds for cattle, usually dropping their eggs unconsidered where they happened to be. Fowls in particular had to go in to roost at night, or when they thought it was night, so that they could be secured from foxes, and when the War came and we got involved with Double Summer Time the bed-time for fowls was later than the bed-time for farmers who had to milk early in the morning ready for the collection lorry.

Because of the use of horse-power on just about every farm, farmers often kept several horses, normally mares and geldings, and bred their own foals. Mares would have a short spell of maternity leave and lighter duties, but soon went back to work and the foal would run about in the field whilst its mother worked, wandering off to explore something and then rushing back to mother for reassurance. I suppose that this business of being with mother whilst she worked, only a small variation on the natural system of being with her whilst she grazed, or watched the world go by, or whatever else horses do, was a gentle introduction to the life of work that was its future. Stables used to be decorated with prize certificates, red or blue rectangles, won by the farmer for various competitions that his horses held, sometimes dozens of them at a successful farm competitions, and there is no doubt about the fact that horses considered their stable as home. Rubber Wellington boots were very uncommon and farmers wore water-tight leather boots and also leather gaiters which protected their legs below the knee and shed the wet from vegetation over the outside of the boots.

Farmers of those days with their gaiters and waistcoats and hats were just as obvious on market day as are the present day farmers in their caps and jackets. However gaiters and boots were not as easy as Wellingtons for removal, and there was continual disagreement between the farmer's wife who had scrubbed her kitchen floor and the farmer who did not wish to take off, and put back, his boots and gaiters.

The Produce Market was much less well organised than now. Stalls lined both sides of the Market Place roadway from High Street to the War Memorial, right along from the cross-roads at the bottom of High Street so that the roadway left for traffic was almost half what it normally was in width. The stalls tended to hide the shops so much that my father hired a stall space outside our shop, and used the space to erect a trestle table that carried a few rolls of towelling, with the shop being less buried behind council stalls as a result.



Market Day Uttoxeter. Sketchley's mentioned by John was where Mrs Wadham's shop is in the photo.

Postcard courtesy Roy Lewis



Postcard courtesy Roy Lewis.

The south side of the Market Place, from present day Sketchleys to Derbyshire Building Society, was used by the local people to sell their own produce; this was called "standing on the stones", a reminder of the days when the Market Place was cobbled, as was revealed once again when the present brick blocks were laid, and local people had the right to sell their portable produce for a very low rent standing place.

They brought eggs and day-old chicks, baby ducks, goose eggs and pheasant eggs, farm-shot rabbits, baskets of damsons, plums apples, seedling plants, in fact anything that they had in excess and which would turn into money. There were many of them then, even now there are still a few people who exercise their right to sell "on the stones". The space between "the stones" and the line of stalls seemed to be filled completely without plan, with traders selling from a few odd stalls set at any angle, and from handcarts and from heaps - crockery, pans, bucket., meat, cakes, all sorts of things. When it grew dark in winter the stalls lit "flares" which I remember as J-shaped objects that were hung from the stall frame; the horizontal part of the J was a storage tank for paraffin which was pumped up to pressurise it, and the paraffin came down the vertical stem of the J and into an upward-facing fireclay nozzle which produced a yellow "batwing" flame. The flames were open and unguarded, and not very efficient, in the same way that oil-lamps or gas batwing flames were not very good in comparison with

the glowing mantles that superseded them, but they gave some light and that seemed satisfactory. My recollection of November seems to involve late afternoon on Wednesdays, with wind and drizzle and stalls half lit by flares, and cattle rushing along the roadway on the way to the station, a scene that should have been painted by an artist in the same way that the Dutch market scenes have been recorded.

Life was much more influenced by the seasons in those days when deep-frozen food was unknown and aeroplanes were not available to rush fresh food from Israel or South Africa. On the whole, New Zealand lamb and Argentinean beef excepted, you ate whatever was in season, and tried to store against the times of scarcity. Eggs which were readily available at one penny each in springtime were "put down" in containers of waterglass, which preserved nearly all of them for use in winter time as cooking eggs. You always had to open each egg individually in ease it was the odd one which had gone off, whereas the scarce winter eggs at five pence or even seven pence each were bought as a treat for boiling. Apples were bought, or given as presents, in their season and after examination for quality were stored on sheets of newspaper in cool attics or frost free places. Carefully picked and sorted damsons could also be stored for many week, spread out and regularly checked for any mouldy failures. Damsons could also be preserved in their own juices; stone jam jars originally holding seven pounds of jam for confectioners (and now sold by antique shops) were freely available and they were filled with damsons and put in the oven to bake for a suitable time. When removed from the oven the damsons would have settled into their own juice, everything sterile from long cooking, and over the top of this would be poured well clarified very hot mutton fat which when everything had cooled down gave a fat-sealed almost everlasting storage. When required, the fat was broken open and lifted out in chunks, and there was a collection of perfectly good unsweetened cooked damsons.

I mention damsons because the town was overwhelmed by damsons in the brief time when they were in season, and we at home used to have them sold to us or given as presents, in clothes-baskets, full to the top, Back in the last century and into the turn of this century the whole area grew damsons, as still can be seen if you move about when the damson blossom is in flower, between the wild blackthorn and the stupidly early pear blossom, with enormous numbers of trees concentrated in Marchington Woodlands and around Denstone. These would be picked into their strike baskets and into buckets and all sorts of other containers, another labour-intensive occupation, - damsons are often left to fall off trees

now-a-days, because they are too much trouble to be picked, - and brought into town to the Damson Fair. My mother used to talk about all the roads into the town being clogged up with carts full of damsons coming for sale. There is a famous photograph of Balance Street during the Damson Fair, crowded with horse-drawn vehicles full of damsons, and another famous photograph of Balance Street full of horses for the Horse Fair - Balance Street was the widest street in town, apart from the Market Place and was used for the selling fairs. Apart from local consumption, the damsons were bought up by two firms of buyers from Manchester and Liverpool to go off by train and turned into dye for the cotton trade.



Fruit Market Balance Street where damson were sold in season.
Postcard courtesy Uttoxeter Heritage Centre now renamed The Museum of Uttoxeter Life.



The Horse Fair in Balance Street. The Greyhound Inn is on the left and the Catholic Church can be seen a little further along on the same side.

Postcard courtesy Utttoxeter Heritage Centre now renamed The Museum of Utttoxeter Life

I have recently talked to a very old railway man who, when he was young, worked at Norbury Station between Rocester and Ashbourne. This used to be a collection point for damsons grown in the Ellastone Denstone Alton region, and he remembers the filling up of railway vans with eight tons of damsons to a van, many vans at a time. If you have ever picked damsons, all of them by hand, from a ladder balanced precariously against queer shaped trees lining hedge rows, you can appreciate what work was involved. This was a regular pan of the local economy until the discovery and production of aniline dyes made damson dye redundant.

Various sorts of plums, each with its own season, greengages and damsons, gooseberries and blackcurrants, were all preserved in Kilner jars - glass jars in which the fruit and syrup is simmered until sterile and then sealed down hot, with a screwed down rubber washer. Raspberries, blackcurrants, strawberries, gooseberries, Seville oranges, rhubarb and ginger, cherries, blackberries, crab-apple juice, all were turned into jams and jellies, and various vegetables and fruits were turned into pickles and chutney, all to make use of what was in season and keep it for when less was available. Runner beans, a favourite and nutritious vegetable, were packed into jars with layers of salt and salt beans were an easily

made vegetable preserve. They were really a rather poor substitute for fresh beans, hardly acceptable by anyone these days when frozen beans are available.

It was a lot of work for the housewife and her family, but it was the natural progression from the Middle Ages when the late winter months were completely non-productive and people had to live on dried food such as cereals or peas and beans, helped out with smoked or dried or pickled meat if they were rich enough to afford such luxuries. However, in my childhood, very few women went out to work, but worked really hard at home, washing and cleaning, child raising and cooking from basic ingredients, so that food preservation was just one more job that saved money when money was scarce and added variety to what could have been a very plain diet.

Housework in its various forms was still a prolonged and laborious occupation, although not as difficult as when my mother was a child, for in her day carpets had to be brushed by hand, or taken outside and beaten, whereas we had a carpet sweeper, and later on a vacuum cleaner after electricity had come to the town. However, washing clothes and washing crockery had all to be done without as-yet-to-be-invented detergents, just soaps and washing soda. Most fires were open coal fires. Central heating and continental style closed stoves in ordinary homes were abnormal. Washday, usually on Monday, was a fairly common occurrence in most homes. We had a copper, that almost ubiquitous half-sphere made of cast iron - no longer copper - set in a brick support with a small fire box under the metal. Ours was in an outhouse, but coppers were common in nearly all sculleries, with just a few people having gas-heated boilers. The copper was dusted out and filled on Saturday or Sunday, taking perhaps a dozen buckets of water, and the fire was laid ready, and it was lit at about seven o'clock on Monday morning. Whilst breakfast, washing-up, bed making and a few more jobs went on, the copper heated up its water. At this stage of life I cannot remember the proper sequence of skilled events on washday, but it followed a well-tried system because the copper had to provide all the clean hot water, and be used as a boiling vessel with soap in it, and as a boiler with washing soda in it, and at the same time the fire and the water use had to be co-ordinated so that the fire was dying out by the time the last hot water was needed. I know that you could beat the system to some extent by floating partly-filled buckets of clean water in the soapy water so that the bucket water heated up whilst still clean. I well remember that indispensable tool called a mundle, a piece of wood like a brush handle, all furry from years of use in boiling water, with which my mother would lift out boiling clothes, to drain them on the heavy wooden upturned lid from the copper. We no

longer used a dolly tub and dolly pegs, but had a metal tub with a lip at its edge and a copper bell-shaped semi-vacuum-creating plunger which lifted clothes up and down whereas the dolly pegs swilled them backwards and forwards. Nevertheless both methods took quite a lot of effort, and we as children during school holidays, took our turn at pumping clothes about. Being over-zealous and a bit careless, water would slop overboard and we would have to be called to order. Collars had to be soaped and scrubbed, white articles had to be dipped in Reckitts' Blue, sheets and pillowcases had to be mangled and we had to be warned not to let them fill up with air and get burst by over enthusiastic mangling and all sorts of fun and reprimands went on during washday. Really I cannot remember it all, but it was a full morning's work, even with help from a washer-woman.

During school-term our dinner was often a very indifferent affair because washing was still going on, but in holidays we were recruited to work. Hanging out washing was not children's work because we were not tall enough to reach the lines, but it seemed all mixed up with the washing sequences, and upset by rain, and generally unpleasant and a worry. When the weather was freezing the washing froze too, and we had to help with carrying frozen sheets, like great boards of plywood, which must not be bent, because the threads would break when the rigid sheet cracked. The sheet was gently humoured into the warmth of the house where they could soften up and become foldable. The end of washday was a time for using up any left-over water to clean out the drains scrubbing down the sump with a brush. The kitchen drain in particular, with no detergents to disperse fat, tended to collect grease as the hot water cooled in the drain and a periodical session with a brush and hot soapy soda water kept things under control. This region of grease collection was also a collection zone for large slugs which came to feed on the fat residues, revolting creatures which seemed to be able to withstand periodical flushes of used washing-up water.

Drying seemed to go on outside all afternoon if the weather was fine, but in wet weather clothes had to dry indoors on clothes-horses, not only on Monday but on Tuesday also, and ironing got all mixed up with drying and the whole house smelled of washing. It all seems to be very different from today's system of washing, with clean machines that are prepared to work on various sized quantities at any hour of day or night, working with detergents on a wide variety of fabrics, and with very little manual labour involved.

Religion played quite an important part in life, at a time when Sunday was kept as a very different day from the other days of the week. Certainly there were no races or football matches and the few shops that did open to sell newspapers and

cigarettes closed at the end of the morning. Church attendances were higher than at present, and most churches and chapels had their own individual priest or vicar or minister.

When you went into hospital or into The Forces, you were always asked "What Religion?" but this did not mean were you a Jew or a Buddhist, it meant were you a Methodist or a Roman Catholic. There were three religious groups in town, the Roman Catholics, the Church of England, and those who belonged to one of the Free Churches. The latter group was the Wesleyan Methodist, the Primitive Methodists and the Congregationalists, three churches who co-operated together in as much as their Sunday Schools visited each other's annual festivals. Also there were the Plymouth Brethren and the Quakers, who both kept themselves to themselves. The three religious groups pursued their own courses of non-co-operation, only attending outside one's group for the occasional funeral service.

I can well remember the indignation of one of my great-aunts, a chapel attender, when she was asked to subscribe to a maintenance appeal for the church bells - the Anglican Church was nothing to do with her. Now that we have accepted the idea of ecumenism, with assorted denominations being willing to share many features of church life, the separation of sixty years ago seems to be very foolish. The Anglican Church was held to have the highest social standing, and it was not uncommon for social climbers or would-be successful business men to join that church as a help to their success. The religious barrier extended to schooling, and each group had its own school which children joined when they were five and left when they were fourteen, the school leaving age, unless they had transferred to Alleyne's Grammar School or the Girls' High School where the school-leaving age was sixteen. The Catholic children had the church-governed St. Joseph's School in Springfield Road, the Free Church children had The Heath School which was a County School, and the Anglican children had the old Victorian-built National School in Bradley Street, church controlled.

I, as a Congregationalist child, went to The Heath School. We all walked to school, from Bridge Street or Dove Bank and Bramshall, or where ever we happened to live, and at this stage I cannot remember a child or a teacher who travelled any other way than by foot or, rarely by bicycle, and no one thought it remarkable that infant school children should daily walk four journeys of up to a mile with no worries about assault or kidnapping. The Heath School had one and a half hours dinner break so that just about all the children could walk home, be fed, and walk back in time for afternoon lessons. I have intentionally called it dinner break

because just about everyone in town, and on the farms, had the main meal of the day at midday, with some sort of high tea or supper at late afternoon or early evening.

Nearly all of the children wore boots in the winter half of the year, normal style lace-up boots for boys and calf-length boots with some hooks rather than eyelets for the girls. Most town children walked either along Abraham's Walk - also known as Narrow Walk - past Elkes Biscuit Factory which in my childhood was just a one-bay long factory, The engine house was situated at the Narrow Walk end of the building so that we could see the fly-wheel turning, which we felt we had to run past in case the huge wheel broke up and threw pieces of metal in our direction. Otherwise we walked across the Cockstubbles Fields, with the little brook that had water-snails in it. In either case there were open fields with cattle grazing, and The Heath and The Town were separate places.

When I was nine there was a major change in school organisation, and all the non-Catholic infants and juniors had to go to the Bradley Street Church School, and then they went up as seniors and all were sent in The Heath County School until they left aged fourteen. Academically minded children went to Alleyne's Grammar School or The Girls' High School. Both these schools had scholarship children and fee paying children - £12 a year, a system which seemed to function quite well, and you were expected to stay until aged sixteen and try to pass the old School Certificate Examination. Just a few children stayed on into the Sixth Form, but this was the exception rather than the rule. Children came from a wide catchment area, down the Churnet Valley by train from as far as Oakamoor, or from Tean, and occasionally from Cheadle, and Abbots Bromley by normal service bus, and from Marchington, Sudbury or Leigh by bus or train or from Abbots Bromley by bus. Public transport was reasonably good and you were expected to be responsible for your own travelling arrangement and to be on time. The religious divisions had to be largely ignored at grammar school level, except that the Catholic children only attended the first and the last assembly of each term. They were exempt from the normal religious school assembly, held every day, and there was something slightly ironic about this because the Grammar School was founded by Thomas Alleyne who was a Catholic priest and his school rules state that all scholars should say a Psalm, a 'Pater Noster' and a "Credo-in-Deum" each morning, and other prayers after dinner time - he does specify dinner - and at going home time. Perhaps the eight or nine Catholics should have attended assembly whilst all the other scholars stayed away.

Public transport was quite good, trains ran to Derby, to Leek and Manchester, and to Stoke and Crewe, frequent services for perhaps fourteen hours a day, with stations at quite short intervals. We had two local bus companies, Stevenson's with yellow buses which stood in the Market Square by the end of Queen Street, and Whieldon's with green buses that had a garage behind the White Horse and a bus station by the Wheatsheaf. Originally these small firms seemed to buy second hand buses, and tales used to abound concerning their breakdown rate, some of the anecdotes being quite true. For example, there is the tale of the Stafford bus which did not have enough power to carry its load of passengers up Weston Bank, so the passengers had to get out and walk whilst the bus, now empty and light, climbed the hill successfully. There is the tale of the eight o'clock bus to Handsacre for Birmingham. The shoppers could transfer to another bus to get to Birmingham; the eight o'clock driver did not appear, being eventually found asleep in bed, so a relief driver took the bus nearly as far as Abbots Bromley where it broke down, so it waited until a bus from Handsacre to Uttoxeter came along with its driver known to be a motor mechanic and he eventually got the broken down bus able to carry on, and with the time lost in Uttoxeter and Abbots Bromley and at Handsacre, until a later connecting bus arrived there, the shoppers arrived in Birmingham after midday.



A bus standing in Market Place in the 1920s. Dunicliff's drapers shop was further up on the left. The sign on the back of the bus reads A Slater & Sons Ashbourne. Postcard courtesy Jim Foley

However, the buses served a very useful purpose, with regular buses to places like Kingstone and Admaston. We also had Potteries Motor Transport and Trent buses, and services ran every hour to Longton or several times a day to Cheadle and Hanky or to Ashbourne and on to Derby. These buses "stood" by Sketchley's side door, and all along the edge of the Market Place from Sketchley's to Derbyshire Building Society. On Wednesday all the buses including a few market-day-only private buses stood in Balance Street, and it was fairly chaotic in that street. Market Street end was blocked because of stalls in the Market Place, and Carter Street entrance was quite narrow because of the presence of the Shrewsbury and Talbot public house, long ago removed because it badly restricted the road width both down The Hockley and into Balance Street. Buses had to be turned round by reversing in and out of Pinfold Street.

We had a rather fine fire engine when I was a boy. It was the sort that appears in old films or in-out-of date children's books. It had no roof of any sort so the firemen were exposed to the weather. It had very strong-looking wheels, six thick spokes to a wheel, and the tyres were solid rubber. It seemed to have low gears so that it could drag itself over fields or rough country, and the ladders ran lengthways down the centre of the machine. The driver and the man who rang the big polished brass bell faced forwards, sheltered a little behind a windscreen, but the other firemen sat facing out sideways with their backs to the ladders. They all had the classical polished brass helmets and were part-time volunteers. When a call-out came, the town-hall keeper, who lived in a little timber-framed house on the upper side of the cattle-market archway, would let off a maroon - a sort of loud-explosion-rocker- such as is still used to call out life boat men - in the cattle market, and the firemen would abandon their work as garage owner, grocer, fitter at Bamfords' and such like, and would run or cycle to the cattle market, where the fire engine was kept, opposite the electricity building. Local boys and other interested folk would congregate opposite the archway, and cheer mightily when the engine came roaring out in one of its low gears, with its bell clanging. Many a fireman who arrived after the engine had left could borrow a bicycle if the fire happened to be fairly local, and would set off in pursuit. It all sounds a little crazy and inefficient, but it was a big improvement on the fire engine which preceded my childhood appliance because the earlier one was horse drawn. I have been told that the horses lived in a field over the Hockley Crossing, so the horses had to be fetched from there to High Street and then be harnessed up before the fire engine could start its journey. It seems queer that we were able to hear

the maroon's explosion, because there must have been quite a lot of noise in town, Bamfords' factory machinery, engines shunting, horse-shoes clattering and iron-tired wheels rumbling in the street. Even so we did manage to hear things such as the playing of the church carillon every three hours of daytime or the call to work of Bamfords' factory hooter or the screaming of the high-flying swifts who nested in the parish church tower.

Somehow life seemed to be less under pressure and, in consequence, gentler and quieter. People in general seemed to have more respect for other people and their property, and things like the mugging of old ladies, rapes of women in their own homes, or sexual crimes against children either were very rare or they were not publicised. There certainly were burglaries, and assaults, but the incidence of crime and the determination of the criminal to do what he would without regard to people or property was less than at present. Very few people locked house doors, and when they did lock up it was a token gesture with windows left open and with the door-key hidden under the mat or a flower pot, or left lying on the windowsill of the outdoor lavatory. Normally if you went to see a relative you just opened the door and called, "Anybody at home", and expected to be made welcome or you just went away again.

It cannot be due to less troubles for people, for there were plenty of troubles about. Farm workers fell off hay carts and were killed, submarines failed to surface and all on board died, mining villages shared communal grief in pit disasters, children died from scarlet fever and diphtheria, and a combination of old age and poverty brought a poor end to life for many people.

There was a much larger financial gap between social classes, with considerable abuse of power by those who had wealth, but rightly or wrongly, people tended to accept their stations in life without jealousy causing a fall in moral standards and a feeling that anyone who wanted something had a right to take it.

Banks did not function behind metal grills or glass sheets with hollows to slide money under the anti-thief devices, but had beautiful open-top counters across which you could shake hands and openly pass money backwards and forwards. Farms with spare produce could leave an unmanned stall full of goods at the roadside together with a box in which you could put your money for your flowers or strawberries or whatever was on offer, and very few petty thefts occurred. Churches were unlocked and were treated with respect! Except in the cities where policemen went about in pairs, the average policeman had a beat where he walked or cycled and kept an eye on things, and most of the police, like the village

bobby, were known personally and they had a fair idea of who the wrong doers were. One of the police jobs was to walk around all the shops late in the evening, literally feeling the doors to see that things had been locked up, and a policeman fairly regularly stood on the road at the junction of High Street and Carter Street, doing traffic duty for only a fraction of today's traffic flow.

Respect for other people extended to an observance of Armistice Day remembrance. The two minutes silence took place on 11th November whatever the day of the week. Certainly as late as the early 1930's, schools and factories were prepared to keep the two minutes for remembrance, and it was quite normal to see some of the traffic come to a stop.

The town had its own manual telephone exchange, situated upstairs over the Post Office in Carter Street, and in summer time, when windows were open, the telephonists could be seen at work. Telephone numbers presumably started at 1 and were just allocated as demand built up. Bunting's brewery was Uttoxeter 3, Dr Foxton's practice was Uttoxeter 5, Dr Herbert's practice was Uttoxeter 10, the Imperial Laundry was Uttoxeter 73, and Richardson's Coach Works in Park Street was Uttoxeter 84. With the exception of the long gone brewery, these numbers can still be found embedded in the present six-figure number of the successors to those firms of sixty years ago. The telephonists obviously knew who the subscribers were, and probably also knew a good deal about the subject matter of the telephone calls, and in keeping with the personal service habits of the time would often make polite small talk with the subscribers. However, like the milkman, they were part of the caring community, the sort of folk who knew when a teenager had been left alone at home and who could make a telephone fall just to see that things were going on satisfactorily.

The main employer in the town was Bamfords' Ltd. probably employing about a sixth of the male work force. At ten minutes to eight in the morning the factory hooter, known as the bull, used to give two blasts as a warning of time, and at eight o'clock there was one blast and the gates in Spiceal Street were closed. We used to see men running to get in before the gates closed, and I have seen men arriving just too late and kicking the gates in anger because now they were locked out and would lose several hours pay. The factory turned out at twelve thirty and hundreds of men poured up Market Street, cycling, running or walking, all in a hurry to get home for dinner and be back for one thirty. For two or three minutes it was just impossible to move against the flow of bodies. The congestion was much less at five thirty when work finished because there was not the pressure to be ready for a later shift at work. Bamfords' factory seems to have

just grown in bits and its time and motion system was terrible, as too was the physical state of some of its departments, but it had an excellent system for spare parts and farmers used to go at harvest time and collect parts for broken down machines. Bamfords developed the first mechanical mowing machine before 1900, and even after the end of the war in 1945 you could still go and get spare parts for that first machine.

I had an uncle who was a traveller for Bamfords' Ltd., these days called a representative, whose patch of country was Eastern England. He used to go off on Monday and come back on Friday, travelling by train where he could in the days when passenger carriages in winter had big oval hot-water containers on which the passengers could warm their feet. The travellers for all sorts of business used to collect up in hotels known to them for their overnight stay, and they got to know each other and elected one particular person to be the carver of the meat and "father" for the night's group. How many calls a traveller could make in a day when he visited towns by rail or public bus I do not know, but it is all very different from today's system of rushing about under pressure.

Life seemed to be slower and more gentle in many ways when I was a child. Uttoxeter police station had a superintendent in charge, with several sergeants under him, and with policemen who tended to stay for years and who, like the village bobby, got to know the people of the district and to know who was a likely to have a tendency for wrong-doing. The pace of life in general seemed to be much slower, and in a way life seemed simpler. There were two regular public periods of jollity. One was the town carnival which raised money for the hospitals at Derby and Stoke which looked after Uttoxeter, a carnival with floats and walking entrants and bands, much like the carnivals of latter years, and the other was the Wakes Fair which came in September, with its dodgems and merry-go-rounds, coconut shies and boxing tent, again much like the present travelling fairs but rather simpler and viewed much less critically because we were all less sophisticated. Circuses too came, erratically, not up to the standard of the few famous circuses, but again welcomed without undue criticism. The town, and the villages, made a lot of their own entertainment with amateur dramatic societies, choral groups and societies, and concert parties, again all well received because we saw little professional acting and singing with which we could compare our home-made stuff.

When I was a young child we had one cinema in town, The Queen's Cinema in Queen Street which runs at the back of the Market Place between Market Street and Bridge Street, presumably the street being named after the cinema. It stood

where the open space used as The Town House car park is now, and was similar in design to hundreds of small-town cinemas, and it was nick-named The Flea Pit, again a fairly common and unjustified name. As was normal for the times, films used to break and need time to be re-organised, or the change over from one projector to the next did not go smoothly, and there was much good-hearted cheering as the programme got started again. The news-reels of the week were our main visual contact with what was happening in the world - car racing, serious fires, foreign wars, the sort of thing in miniature that we now see on television news and we stood at the end of the show whilst The National Anthem was played. Then late in the 1930's the Elite Cinema was built, so that the two cinemas each offered two three-day runs of films each week, with two complete performances twice nightly. The second showing began at about 8.45 p.m. and for good films it was quite normal for The Elite to have a queue from the cinema up High Street almost to Red Gables which stands in front of our present library. It was surprising how quickly a queue of this size could buy tickets and get seated, and the performance waited until the queue had been accommodated.

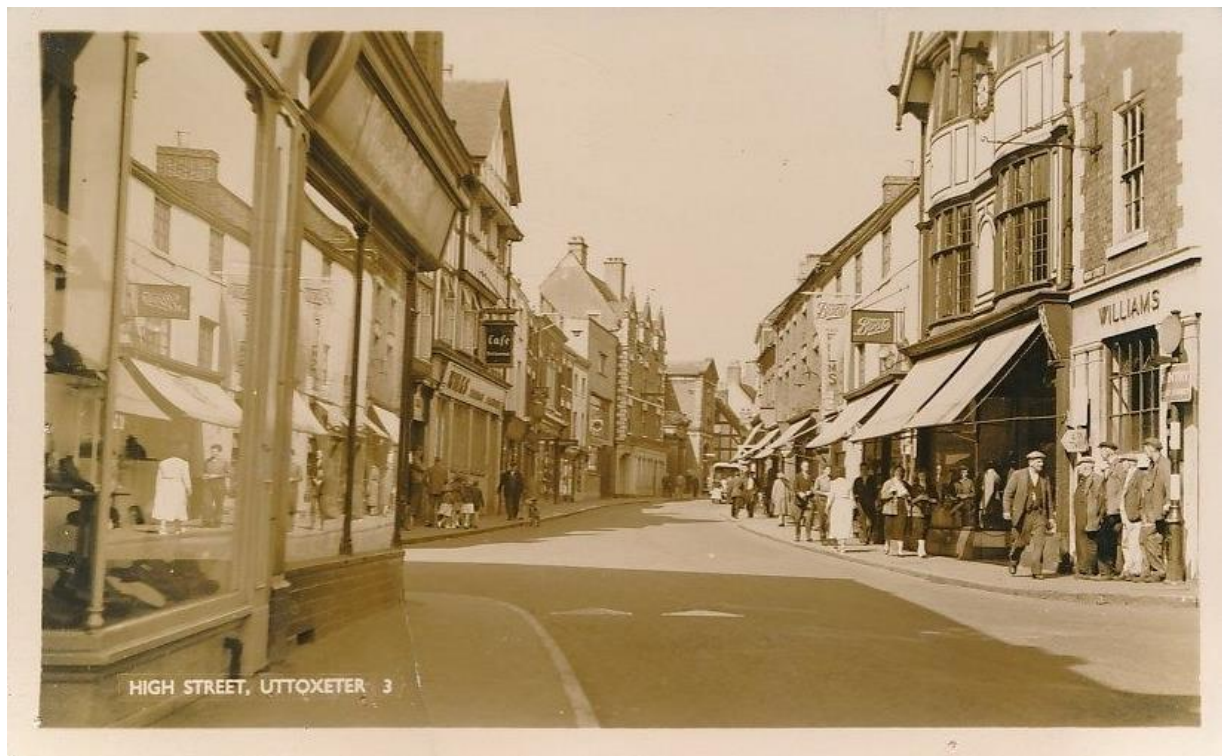
The Town Hall was used for public lectures on current affairs, such as the Italian war with Abyssinia or explorers' experiences such as a visit to Tibet, the lectures being at quite moderate charges, and we had two lending libraries, one a county library in one of the Town Hall rooms and one run by Boots the Chemists; they were small libraries but they made books available to people at low cost when books were more usually bought rather than borrowed. Many things only changed very slowly. The cost of postage seemed to be the same for all my childhood; bills or printed matter could be sent in an envelope with its flap tucked in - no sealed - for a half-penny, postcards cost one penny and sealed envelopes cost three ha'pence - one and a half pence -, and this stayed the same for very many years. A two pound loaf, which had cost four pence, cost four and a half pence for much of my childhood and when the price had to be raised I believe in the late 1940s, it was considered better to reduce the weight of the loaf and sell one and three quarter pound loaves at the old price of fourpence ha'penny - four and a half pence - rather than keep the weight the same and put up the price.

Another thing that did not change was the Boxing Day Meet of the Meynell Hunt which took place in the Market Place. Horse boxes brought the riding horses, and also a few spare horses, to be unloaded in the Market Place, and both the hounds and the riders normally also arrived by motor transport. It was quite a social event for the huntsmen and women, properly dressed in "hunting pink" or black, with occasionally a lady rider using a lady's side saddle. In due course, following

tradition horses and hounds trotted off up High Street and through Bramshall to a small wood just past the third milestone on the road to Stone, to search for the first fox of the day. Quite a collection of people followed, in cars or running together with the hunt transport vehicles whose job it was to follow the hunt by some system we ordinary folk never found out - pre-planned searching sites, intuition about where foxes might run, knowledge of all the roads of the area and other useful facts -, and joined people already gathered by the wood. If a fox was disturbed and ran off in a suitable direction, followed by the hunt, the car people would get back into cars and try to make a guess about where the hunt could be viewed again, whilst the foot followers ran behind the hunt, again trying to anticipate where the chase could be seen. In those days a few people felt vaguely sorry for the fox in case the hounds managed to catch it, but no-one felt unduly troubled because it was all part of country tradition. At some stage most of the spectators lost interest, and returned home, leaving the hunt to enjoy its outing.

Part of the Christmas time tradition for the town was The Guisers or the Christmas Mummers. Like the Abbots Bromley Horn Dance or Morris Men, this was a fairly simple symbolic acting performance with origins hundreds of years old. It was a street or public house performance based on some moral issues of right and wrong, reward and punishment, with a muddle of characters getting killed and resuscitated, all in fancy dress, well primed with alcohol and largely incomprehensible, and passed on by family tradition over the generations.

Another tradition surviving from earlier days was the cooking of Christmas Dinner. Further back in history many homes did not have an oven for the roasting of meat or the baking of pies or bread, and there was a town oven to sell people baking space. In my childhood Elkes' bakehouse, at the junction of High Street and Carter Street, offered its oven for Christmas day cooking. My family used to have a goose, and because it was just a short distance from our shop to Elkes' Corner we had our goose cooked for us. It was taken early in the morning and the baker knew when to start cooking any particular bird or joint. At the appropriate time we went to collect it, nearly always two people, one with suitable cloths to cover it and to carry a hot heavy cooking tin full of goose and run-out juices, and the other to carry a big umbrella to shield the carrier and her load from the rain which always seemed possible of Christmas Day.



Elkes' Corner on the left at the corner of Carter Street and High Street. My uncle John Compton Dunicliff had his draper's shop on the corner of Market Place and Carter Street and by the time of the photo Brisbane's had their draper's shop there at 55 Market Place. My grandfather Frederick Dunicliff's draper's shop was a few doors down on the left at No 49. Market Place.

Postcard courtesy Roy Lewis

Elkes' Corner was a very busy place on normal weekdays, important both as a business and a social enterprise. The bakehouse produced bread and confectionery which was sold in the shop, together with a good collection of biscuits which came directly from the biscuit factory; there was also a cafe and restaurant which supplied the needs of those who called in, and a Temperance Hotel - Mr. Charles Elkes had been a strong advocate of teetotalism - which accommodated people over night, and also there was the Hadden Room which was a very useful venue to be hired for meetings, parties dances and club functions.

Treatment of illness in my childhood was much more primitive than it is now, and great advances have been made since then in the whole subject of medical care, with many things that we now accept as normal being completely unknown then. Scarlet fever was a serious acute infection with no useful treatment apart from nursing care and gargling with phenol. Uttoxeter had small epidemics from time to time, and when I had scarlet fever six of us, randomly scattered around the town, developed the disease. We were taken to the isolation hospital at Yarnfield, where parents and relatives "visited" by standing on boxes and shouting through

closed windows. All reading matter had to be disposable, jig saw puzzles or comics such as The Beano being brought to us and shared around, whilst solid books and toys outlasted the owner's stay and then were destroyed. Our house was fumigated whilst I was in isolation, a matter of being sealed and chemicals being burned inside it. Five of us recovered, and one, a girl from Crakemarth, died. We just took our chances about the complications such as rheumatic conditions or heart damage and I was lucky in that I only had periodical aching of the wrists which gradually improved over the years.

Tuberculosis was a problem. Many of the local cattle had tuberculosis and I expect that most of us had repeated infections in lymph glands which drained the alimentary tract. My brother suddenly developed an enormous swelling in his neck, and a T.B. gland was removed, with his eventual recovery, but one heard of numerous children who died. I heard a pathologist talking about a survey he had done for the government, examining soldiers who had been killed in the First War and his post-mortem findings were that over 95% of them had glands which had made a recovery from T.B. infection. In those days tuberculosis was divided into Bovine T.B. - originally in the glandular system - and Human T.B. - originally in the lungs - and it was believed that over-coming Bovine T.B. improved your chances of resisting Human T.B. for which, as in Victorian times, treatment was bed rest and fresh air for months on end, with a considerable number of fatalities.

Childhood infections such as whooping cough or diphtheria were quite critical diseases and on the whole they had to run their course with good nursing care to sustain the patient up to and through that well-known Victorian state "the crisis" which was the time when the patient began to over-come the disease or lapsed into a state of certain death. Because infectious diseases were so serious and so difficult to treat, much more attention was paid then to avoiding them than we feel desirable these days. Usually child contacts of an infected child were kept away from school for predetermined periods. Alleyne's Grammar School used to have health certificates signed by parents which had to be taken to school on the first day of term, to state that the pupil had not knowingly been in contact with infection during the school holiday.

The doctor's services were normally reserved for fairly serious conditions. Self-treatment based on wise folklore and herbalism, followed by advice and medication from the chemist/pharmacist, were the first lines of medical treatment, followed then by the doctor. He tended to run a mini-hospital service, reducing dislocations under quick anaesthetic, setting broken bones by feeling, with no opportunity for X-ray, medicating and bandaging bums, abrasions and

wounds, and treating medical, as opposed to surgical, conditions with the few rather simple drugs at his disposal.

The systemic side of "anti-sepsis" was virtually limited to slow-acting herbal remedies such as meadow sweet or elder or else to quite toxic inorganic material such as arsenic or mercury. In my childhood the systemic antiseptic dyes came into use which by their very nature tended to dye the whole of the patient and these were followed by the sulphonamide group of chemicals in 1935; penicillin and the whole range of modern antibiotics began to be developed around the outbreak of World War 11 and these allowed the development of many of the surgical treatments which we accept as fairly normal these days. Penicillin, although discovered before the War, was reserved for the troops and it was not until after the War that it was available for the general public. My father was wounded in the thigh in the First World War, and his injury settled to a low grade septic condition near the hip joint, a condition which various surgeons considered over the years with the inevitable decision that it was too dangerous to operate, so he lived with a persistent wound for forty years, occasionally being taken into hospital when activity flared up.

I know that two of the normal medicines were "yellow medicine" and "pink medicine" one of which would be the medication of choice for numerous conditions, and there would have been other fairly simple mixtures for coughs, fever conditions, vomiting or diarrhoea. It was all a matter of trying to help the patient to heal themselves, giving sympathy and consolation to patient and family, and the doctor would attend the patient at all hours of day or night, often remaining in the final stages to sit with patient and family until death took place.

Most doctors were family doctors, in one practice for most of their lives, much respected and deserving of that respect for the trouble and effort they put into their work. Most of them ran a sort of social service, with fees tailored to what he thought the patient could manage to pay, some bills were never sent! Those who were affluent enough subsidised the poor, without undue complaint.

The last line of defence was the hospital service. Uttoxeter raised money for two hospitals, at Hartshill and Derby, and by some means-testing system they supplied free treatment to the poor and a fee-paying system for the not-so-poor, if you were above the means-test limit you paid or you stayed untreated.

My doctor took out my tonsils for me at home. The kitchen table was taken up into the bathroom, which was the warmest room in our house, and the anaesthetic would have been "open" chloroform or ether or ethyl chloride, dripped onto a face

mask. He did the work in the afternoon, called round to see how things were before evening surgery, and before he went to bed, and also next day before morning surgery. Childbirth was still a slightly risky business. Home deliveries were the normal state of affairs for most families, with the skill being supplied by the local midwife who usually was a very capable. Complicated cases needed assistance from the local doctor, or if beyond his ability, a hospital consultant was used. In 1936 three quarters of all deliveries were home deliveries, and the registrar's statistics showed a maternal death rate of 5.28% in 1938. It was reckoned that 40% of this death rate could have been avoided. After the birth, care was passed on to the monthly nurse, and tight binders were the fashion for mother and baby. Mother was expected to have bed-rest, and the present ideas about getting new mothers, or post-surgery cases, into some degree of mobility very rapidly is a fairly modern system of treatment.

We accepted as normal a much more primitive condition of life than we choose now. Our house had a general purpose living room in which we ate, listened to the wireless, knitted and read, did homework, and generally carried out much of life's activities, and this was the room in which we had an open coal fire whenever the temperature was low enough. The fire had a trivet on which could be heated a large copper kettle, and at night we used to cook things in a large oval iron pot, simmering away as the fire died out. This pot was used to slow-cook stews, and boiling fowls - old hens which had ceased to lay eggs and therefore became food, and pies heads for making brawn. For my early life the kitchen had no heating apart from what was produced by the gas stove that boiled and baked and roasted everything except the slow-cook food. Later in life a small closed stove was installed in the kitchen so the room could be intentionally heated instead of relying on the by-products of cooking.

The shop had a coke stove, and very ingeniously a bathroom had been formed out of part of the upstairs shop room with access being gained from upstairs of the house, and here was an enormous hot water cylinder and airing cupboard, so that we had the luxury of warmed clothes and a warm room in which to change. We had a sitting room, used on special occasions, and this had a fire which was lit instead of the dining room fire on these special days, and that was the limit of house heating. We all wore plenty of warm woolly clothing, and slept in unheated bedrooms under adequate quantities of blankets and eiderdown, and because we were used to it we existed well enough.

When I was quite small we had an outside privy, a two-hole, well-scrubbed wooden seat over a brick pit, and periodically the night soil men on their rounds would dig

out the collection and take it away. In summer time when it got a bit smelly my father used to bum old cardboard boxes in the pit to sweeten up the region. It sounds very crude for the late 1920's but it was quite a normal system for older shop property in the town centre, and in the old innumerable terrace houses and the yards. Presumably it became unacceptable in course of time, and it was replaced by a flush toilet connected to the sewage system.

We ate fairly plain food. The main meat was beef which must have been comparatively cheap because we seemed to have quite large joints most weekends, but pig meat in all its forms, roast pork, ham, bacon, and numerous pig products such as sausages and pies, polonies and brawns were eaten in large amounts. I cannot remember much lamb, although I expect that it was fairly common, but mutton was a normal commodity or turning into various sorts of stews and pies. Chickens were a rarity and we seemed to eat quite a lot of old hens, with cockerels reared just for eating as a special treat. One of the shops in the High Street used to be the main purveyor of game and poultry, and here the articles for sale were hung up on hooks above the shop window in true Victorian style. There would be pheasants, partridges and grouse, in their seasons, and fowls, turkeys, guinea fowl, ducks and geese, rabbits and hares, all in fur or feather. They were hung up, or taken down, using a pole with a suitably shaped brass end rather like the window poles that all schools used to reach the high-fastening window catches, and you took the chosen birds and animals home with the problem of removing the fur or feathers. We in my family were all fully capable of skinning, plucking and drawing, but it was normally quite possible to pay a woman a recognised piece-work rate to do the job if you were affluent enough. Plucking geese was hard work, and desperately messy with goose-down floating about everywhere, and we either did that out in a wood-store or paid women to take the bird away and deal with it.

Veal was almost unused in Uttoxeter; it was associated in peoples' minds with still born calves, and went off to The Potteries. Most of these meats were much more strongly flavoured than the meats we eat now, because the animals were adult instead of immature, and I am sure that now we should think that the meat; had too much flavour of cowshed, pigsty, hen pen and unwashed fleece. We ate a lot of fried foods, together with fruit pies, jam tarts, boiled puddings and numerous cakes, a diet that would send so called healthy eaters into states of despair, and yet I am not aware that we suffered.

Uttoxeter has made use of its small rivers for hundreds of years, with a corn mill and a cotton mill on The Tean Brook and with a tanyard and pools (use unknown

but they are on old maps and may be connected with flax resting) on The Hockley Brook, We know flax was grown locally. In my childhood The Hockley Brook coming down from Bramshall supplied the paddling pool in The Recreation Ground and then when I was young an outdoor brook-water swimming pool was built in the Rec. One wall of it is still visible on the south side of the brook, but the actual pool has turned into a mound between the brook and the railway. The remnants of the weir which backed-up the water and diverted it into the swimming pool can easily be seen. This pool used to slowly silt up, and each winter it was cleared out; there really was not enough flow through it to keep the pool water as fresh as it should be, and as Bramshall grew bigger pollution increased so that finally the swimming pool was closed down on health grounds. Down by the station was another wind-up wind-down iron gate system to fill up the brook for the dairy to take in a supply of water for washing purposes. The used water was returned to the brook near the station, just above the Ashbourne line bridge, and this effluent was full of milk remains. In summer when the flow was low and temperature a bit raised, long ribbons of milk-coated trailing weeds, two or three yards long, used to half fill the watercourse, a green waving foul-smelling collection that extended past the station and the race course and down as far as the junction of The Hockley and The Dove, nearly half way to Marchington. It really was rather a disgusting smell and sight.

With the closure of the swimming pool swimmers went back to using the river and the brooks. The River Dove long ago had had a weir built across it, below the Derby Road Bridge, to raise the water level in order to work Doveridge Mill, a great solid wedge weir like the weir at Chester. I inspected it when, during the war, the river broke a new course around the end of the weir. It was made of an enormous lattice-work of jointed logs, with the spaces filled in with stone blocks. This weir raised the river level by about six feet, between the weir and Red Nick, and the swimming club had a changing shed in the field up river from Derby Road, with races down to, and under, the road bridge, and then back up to the shed. The river was notorious for its drownings of both non-swimmers and swimmers, due in part to cramp brought on by the cold water that came out of the ground above Mayfield, and in part to the unpredictable under currents in our dammed-up stretch of river. Many of the town boys used to swim in small localised deep pools in the brooks. The Hockley Brook had one just above The Arches where the railway line crosses the brook a field above The Rec, and The Tean Brook had one not far from where the old A50, now the A224 crosses the modern A50. Over the years brook courses change, so these pools are now lost.

The river and brooks were much more prone to winter floods in those days. Derby Road used to flood anywhere from Fryer's garage to the bottom of Red Hill going up to Doveridge sometimes to the point of impassability for a short time, probably only a few hours, because the water used to be able to drain away down to Sudbury and Tutbury with many square miles of land under flood. The flood gates on the Hockley Brook were often raised in winter, but even so The Hockley and Pinfold Street and Station Road often became too flooded to be used for part of a day or night, with water into the houses.



**Pinfold Lane regularly flooded after a heavy rain when the nearby Hockley Brook overflowed.
Postcard courtesy Uttoxeter Heritage Centre now The Museum of Uttoxeter Life**



The Dove in flood looking towards Ashbourne Road from Dove Bridge

When I was a child, all the shop-keepers in the Market Place used to sweep their own bit of pavement each day and clear away snow and ice in winter. For some obscure reason, our pavement, on The Old Talbot side of the Market Place, was the responsibility of the Town Council whereas the other side, Westminster Bank side, was the County Council's responsibility. We had an old brick pavement, bounded by a cast-iron strip such as still can be seen in Market Street, and the other side had a nice concrete slab-and-kerbstone system, and I used to be envious because getting bricks well clean was quite hard work.



This postcard from circa 1905 shows a shopkeeper sweeping the pavement outside No 55 Market Place at the corner of Carter Street. The shop sign reads Dunicliff. This could well be my uncle John Compton Dunicliff sweeping the pavement outside his draper's shop. Brisbournes took over the shop and business from him soon after this.

Postcard courtesy Uttoxeter Heritage Centre now The Museum of Uttoxeter Life

I really believe that there was less litter scattered about in those days. A greater respect for people and their property, a different attitude to public property and an appreciation of what was being provided for community use and a wholly different system of financial values, snack eating and packaging, meant that there was far less scope for rubbish dropping with the exception of cigarette packages and fag ends. Retired old labouring men used to take on lengths of roadway or railway, normally in mile-length units, to see that ditches were cleared, hedges kept back, and verges kept trimmed and they took a pride in their individual lengths. The care of the J.C.B. complex at Rocester is an example of a big company accepting responsibility for caring for its surroundings, and in my childhood a

large number of small care-schemes, often funded by County Council, Town Council or Parish Council, succeeded in keeping the environment under control.

Uttoxeter's long slow change in lifestyle, which followed the coming of the toll roads, and which became slightly less slow after the arrival of the canal, began to accelerate gently with the construction of the railways. Really faster changes came with the development of the internal combustion engine, and its ability to move people and goods at considerable speed into regions formerly limited to the power and speed of man and horse. My childhood was spent in the time when this change, together with the delivery of electricity to the town, was bringing about enormous alterations in how things were done.

The Second World War brought more big changes. Men and some women disappeared into His Majesty's Forces, and many women went out to work in a continual changing pattern of labour. Evacuee children, first from Manchester and later from Kent, appeared in the town, and Women's Land Army Girls appeared on the farms.

Part of Bamford's' factory was commandeered by the War Office and was used to make light-weight armoured vehicles. Bren-gun carriers frequently rattled around the town, and tore up the road surface as their tracks slewed round the corners of streets. The town played host to American servicemen in the evenings, white Americans one night and black Americans the next night; the alternating system preventing racial fighting. American soldiers rushed about the town in open jeeps and caused considerable envy because of their food and general pampering; they also caused amusement when they came to town to collect the weekly money for pay day, because armed men surrounded their vehicles and the bank like something out of a film.

Ordinary people appeared in uniform as they joined voluntary organisations, Home Guard, Civil Defence, Women's Voluntary Service, Auxiliary Fire Service, Special Constabulary, and other groups. They worked anything up to fifty four hours a week on their normal paid job and in addition, put in unpaid hours on their voluntary service, and dug gardens and allotments to produce food that would improve the somewhat Spartan diet of the times. The official Government statements are that we were healthier then than we have been since. Those of us who have grown old enough to realise just what propaganda and lies were told to us by the Government in war time also understand what half-truths and misleading statements are still produced by the Government and other official bodies, in the expectation that we should believe all we hear. I suppose that I was officially

classified as a child until I became aged seventeen, and at that age I joined The Home Guard. It had progressed from its early days as Local Defence Volunteers (LDV), when people did sentry duty at night with shot-guns and hedge-brushing hooks and pitchforks, but it was still very much the organisation which has had such a successful parody presented on television as Dad's Army. Admittedly Dad's Army is somewhat exaggerated but the underlying true facts are very real.

When I joined, there were about ten platoons of us, and the area around the town was divided into the same number of wedge-shaped sections, like a grapefruit cut for serving with the town centre as the central point. My platoon was based on the Wood Lane section, and we spent much of our time on our special location so that we knew it in great detail - holes in hedges, hollows in the ground, structures of barns, positions for ambush were all part of our knowledge. The theory behind it was that our concentrated local knowledge would help us to counter-attack German paratroopers, trained in military tactics but fighting in unknown surroundings, and supposedly we could restrain them until our own fighting forces could join in the battle. Having seen films of paratroopers or marines in action, we all know now how inefficient our Home Guard warfare would have been.

Our main weapons were World War One American .300 rifles brought out of storage, clumsy heavy things that we kept at home, needless to say without ammunition. We had various devices for blocking roads, girders that slid into sockets, cylindrical concrete blocks that were ready to be rolled into the road, imitation mines to lay out on the road, and other devices not really efficient at preventing determined movement. We had a vast assortment of improbable weapons too. One was oil drums that stood by the road side with explosive under them and, in theory, on detonation these drums were supposed to catapult on to the road and burst into flames. Another enterprising idea was a sort of gun affair made out of piping, and capable of shooting out a Molotov cocktail device, a glass bottle which had phosphorus and some viscous inflammable liquid in it, in theory breaking on contact with an enemy vehicle and producing an unquenchable fire. The gun made of piping certainly projected its cargo vaguely in the correct trajectory, but one had to be careful that the fore-sight had not been screwed through the barrel into a state where it broke open the glass bottle as it passed along the tube. After a little while I was moved to the newly-created signals platoon, which was based absolutely on First War techniques, using field telephones, semaphore flags, Morse flags, lamps and heliographs - originally designed for making Morse signals using sunlight on The North West Frontier. Certainly we could transmit visual messages from Eaton Banks to Alleyne's School

playing field, or from The Highwood to the Church Tower, by day or night if the air was clear enough, or set up a Morse telephone system from one control post to another having been given time enough to lay out the wires, but many of the platoon were signallers from the First War and all their thoughts were of military action twenty five years earlier. On the credit side, you could certainly say that comradeship was good, and there was some morale-boosting generated by all being in this together, but it was probably not much use militarily. One of the few advantages of becoming seventeen years old in war-time was that the provisional driving licenced kept having extensions granted. The driving examination was indefinitely postponed until eventually, at some date after the war had finished, there were so many of us with long-term provisional licences that the authorities decided it could not manage to test us all, and granted us full driving licences. It has been a small source of pleasure, when asked on official forms "Which county holds your driving licence certificate?" to be able to answer "None", and still be a law-abiding citizen. Then I left Uttoxeter for over seven years, and when I returned the town had joined the country as a whole in its acceptance of change in everything.

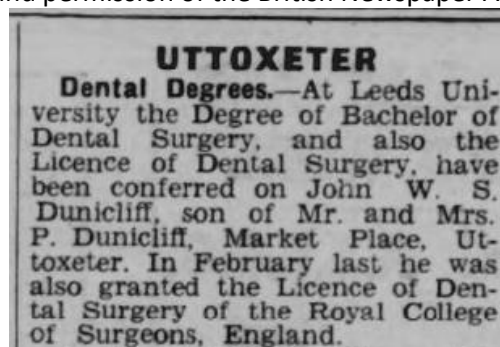


Courtesy Joy Dunicliff

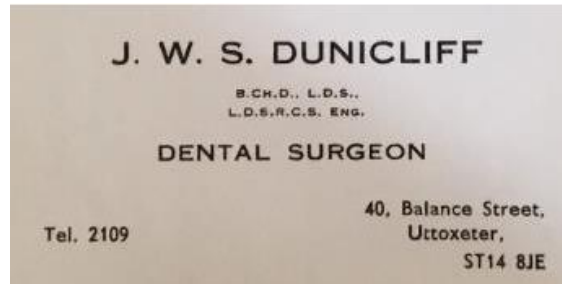
Staffordshire Advertiser - Saturday 12 April 1947

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Courtesy Joy Dunicliff



No 40 Balance Street where John Dunicliff had his dental surgery for 32 years from 1952 to 1984.

John lived with his wife Joy and their children in the flat above the surgery. John's great grandfather Samuel Garle a draper had bought the property in 1851 and lived there when he retired. When he died in 1867 he left the property to his daughter Sarah Jane Dunicliff, John Dunicliff's grandmother who also inherited the block of shops numbered 49, 53 and 55 Market Place. John's father Percy Dunicliff had his draper's shop at No 49 and lived in the house behind it where John was born in 1924. Sarah Jane Dunicliff died in May 1950 and John was able to purchase No 40 from her estate. He had the interior of the house altered so that he had his dental surgery on the ground floor and the family accommodation on the top floors.

Photo Jim Foley



Newspaper cutting courtesy Joy Dunicliff



John Dunicliff with his relatives in the back garden of 40 Balance Street circa 1940s.

Back L to R: Percy Dunicliff, John's father, Ernest Mellor, Gwyneth Mellor, William 'Billy' Dunicliff, Auntie Rose, Margaret Sheddick, nee Mellor.

Middle L to R: Janet Mellor, Mabel Mellor, nee Dunicliff, Sarah Jane Dunicliff, nee Garle, John's grandmother, Dorothy, Frederick Dunicliff,

Front: John Dunicliff and Richard Garle Dunicliff.